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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

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SUBJECT: HANAN ASHRAWI: INTERNATIONAL MEETING, FATAH REFORM AND NEW GOVERNMENT

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. On September 25 in Ramallah, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Hanan Ashrawi told the Consul General that the international meeting this fall must produce concrete results. She said PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and GoI PM Ehud Olmert should use their discussions to develop a framework agreement on permanent status. Ashrawi said Abu Mazen is making "serious mistakes" by resuscitating the Fatah "Old Guard" and that now is the time for Fatah to re-invent itself. She urged support for PM Salam Fayyad's government to demonstrate to Palestinians it is not temporary/transitional by focusing on issues that affect Palestinians' daily lives, such as traffic, crime and strengthening the police force. End Summary.

International Meeting

¶12. (C) PLC member Hanan Ashrawi told the Consul General on September 25 that it will be "dangerous" if the fall international meeting does not produce concrete results. Rather than focusing on a declaration of principles, Ashrawi suggested that Abu Mazen and PM Olmert use their discussions to develop a framework agreement on permanent status issues. She stressed that this should be a multilateral, rather than bilateral, effort that includes the U.S. and Arab states. "Palestinians are too weak to work without Arab cover," she said. She also recommended that the Palestinian negotiating committee include new faces and women, and not just veteran participants like former PM Abu Ala'a, PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat and PLO Executive Committee Secretary-General Yasser Abd Rabbo.

Fatah Reform

¶13. (C) Pointing to Fatah Central Committee (FCC) member Ahmad Quraya's (Abu Ala'a) participation in the negotiating team, Ashrawi said that Abu Mazen is making "serious mistakes" by resuscitating the Fatah "Old Guard." She emphasized the need for Fatah reform and said "I'm sick of Fatah corruption, blackmail and a lack of accountability." Ashrawi said that Hamas is losing, but it is not clear how much Fatah is actually gaining. "We have problems within problems, and the problem with Fatah is not quantity but quality," she said. Ashrawi said Fatah has not capitalized on Hamas' failures in Gaza and the time is now for Fatah to re-invent itself.

New Government Must Produce Results

¶14. (C) Ashrawi said that PM Fayyad was handed a tough job, but praised his efforts to date. Ashrawi applauded Fayyad's

decision to name three women to the PA cabinet and said she sees security improvements on the streets of Ramallah. She commented, however, that Abu Mazen could do more to back Fayyad's efforts. Ashrawi encouraged the government to demonstrate real, visible progress to show Palestinians that it is not temporary/transitional. Paying salaries was a positive first step in doing this, said Ashrawi, but the government must now focus on other issues that affect Palestinians' daily lives, such as traffic, crime and strengthening the police force. Stressing the need for accountability, Ashrawi lamented the PLC's failure to convene but acknowledged that the Hamas majority makes PLC meetings impractical at this time.

¶5. (C) Ashrawi said she would support elections at any time, but the current "tainted atmosphere" will make holding elections difficult. She said the last 18 months under the Hamas government had been a "blow to democracy."

WALLES